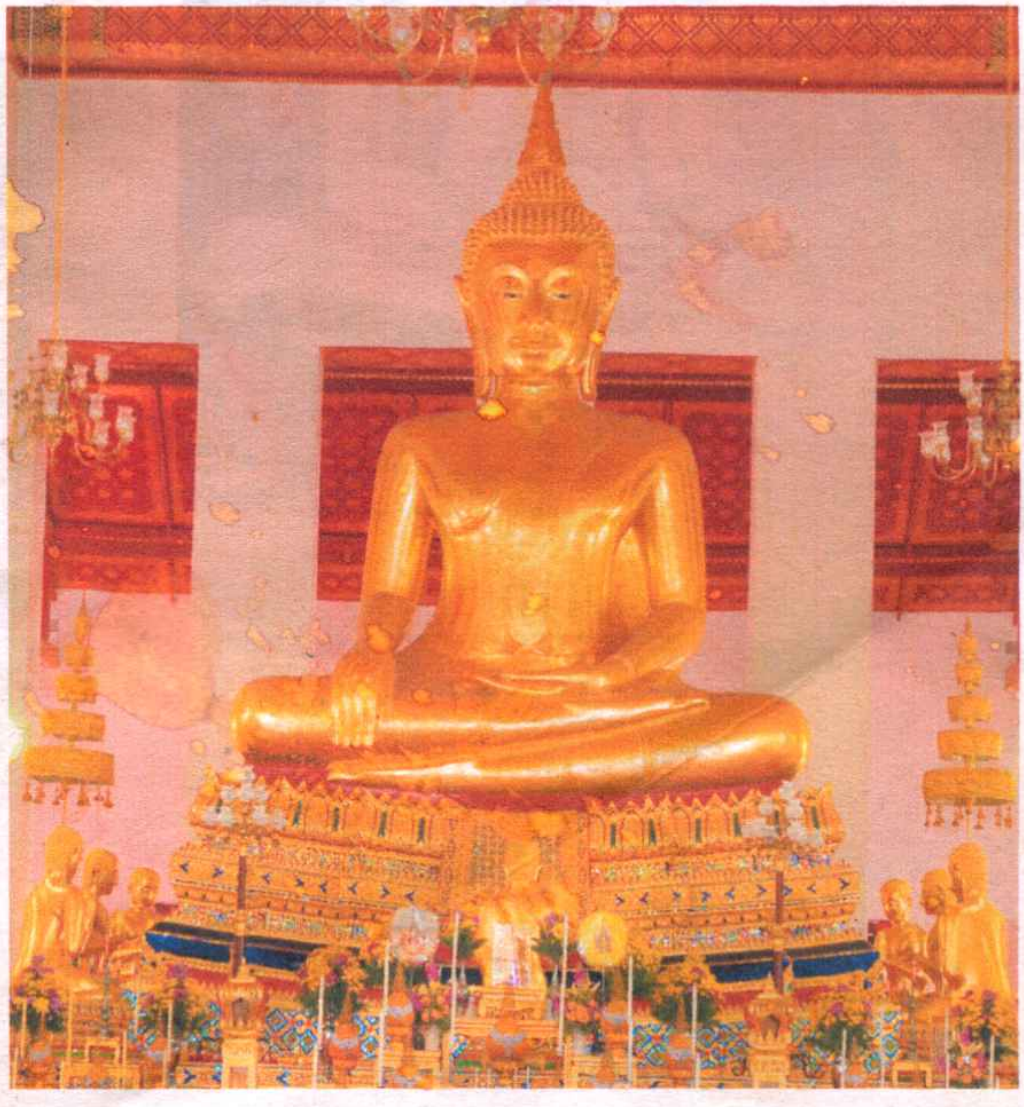
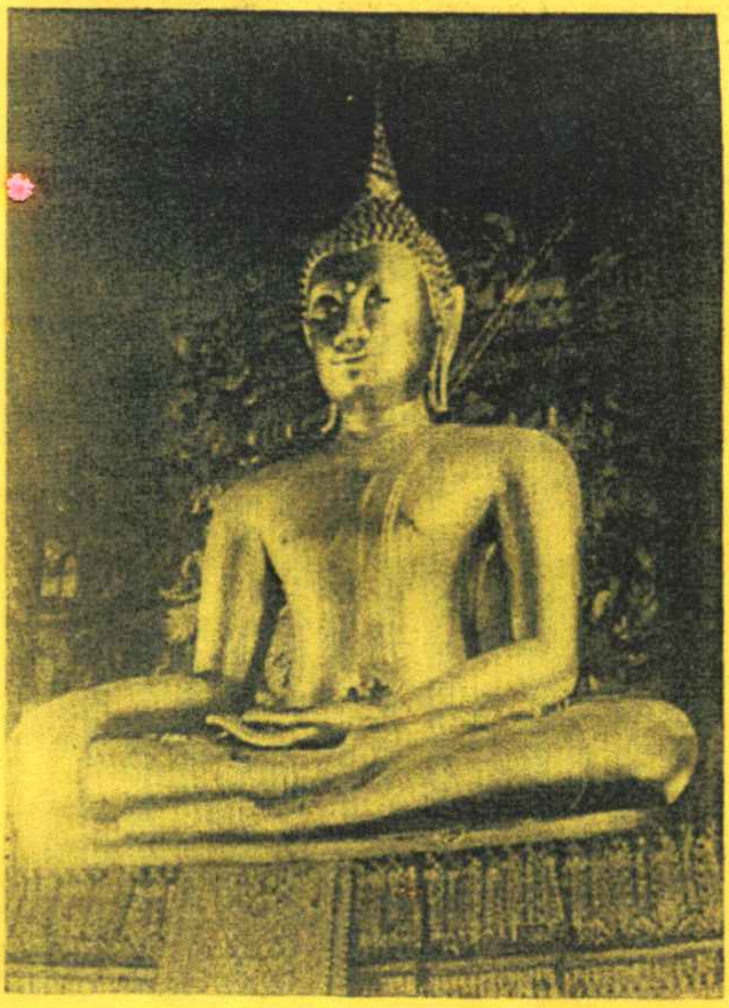
THE WAY TO VIPASSANA

A GUIDE TO INSIGHT MEDITATION

Helen Jandamit





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(A Guide to Insight Meditation Practice)

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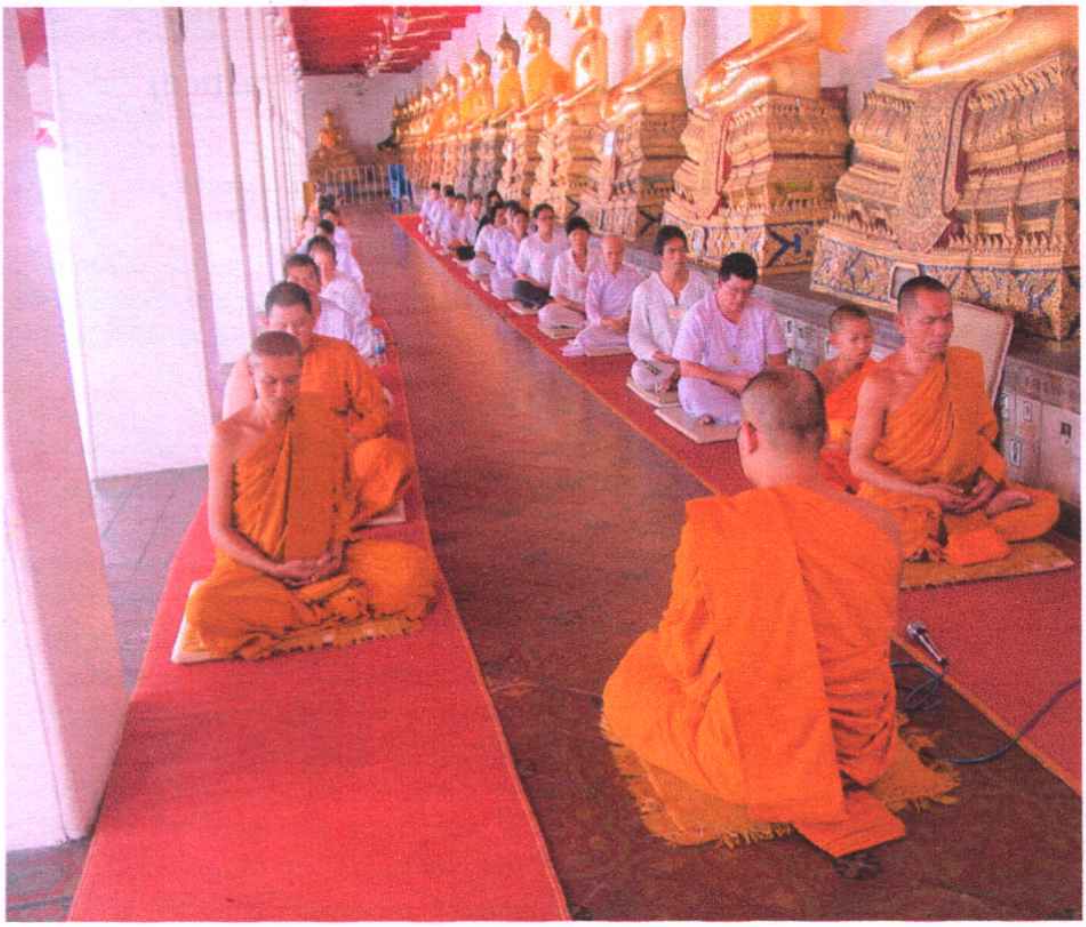

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THE WAY TO VIPASSANA

(A Guide to Insight Meditation Practice)

Written and illustrated by

Helen Jandamit

Published by **V.H. Publications**

Printed at Karn Pim Pranakorn Partnership.
69-71 Buranasas Road, Bangkok. 10200 Tel 2212337 2221674
by Mrs. Aree Chuisuppiam Printer B.E. 2533

PREFACE

Many westerners and people from the East too, are very interested in mind development as a means to find peace and a deeper understanding of life, however they may be wary of organized religion.

This book is a guide to the heart-teaching of a very ancient system of spiritual development; Buddhism. However this book is not only intended for Buddhists or even Buddhist sympathizers. On the other hand it was written for those who would like to try Vipassana or Insight meditation practice in order to find peace within. It contains detailed instructions for standing, walking, sitting and lying down meditation exercises, an indication of what benefits can be expected and a list of possible pitfalls and how to avoid them.

These exercises can be done individually in your own home, in a quiet place anywhere or as part of an organised retreat. In this connection information useful for those who are planning to enter a meditation centre for a longer stay is also included.

Originally written as essays to complement the instruction given at the International Buddhist Youth Seminar held at Dhamma Sathan Vongvanit, Thailand in 1989, this book is for English speaking people from all over the world. As many of the readers may have English as a second language, the vocabulary and syntax have been kept as clear and simple as possible.

The method of practice dealt with in this book is that taught by the late Ven. Dhamma Theerarach Mahamuni who was the Chief Master for Vipassana meditation in Thailand. Vipassana meditation developed within the Theravada tradition which is followed in Srilanka Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Chittagong in Bangladesh.

I would like to express my thanks to Khun Mere Siri Krinchai, Phra Khra Palad Kao of Wat Boonsrimuneegorn and the first team of Dhammadhuta monks from the Buddhapadipa temple in London, all of whom have been good friends and valued teachers.

H. Jandamit

Bangkok
19/6/90

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OPENING THE DOORS OF PERCEPTION

'If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, infinite.'

William Blake.

Vipassana meditation allows the meditator to cleanse his mind of the deepest tendencies which have been subconsciously controlling his perception of the world since birth.

'I suddenly felt very happy... I felt about me a steadily rising tide of enormous joy..... The warmth of the tide was glorious, as of a huge, affectionate flame. I remained intellectually conscious; that is, I was critical of my own condition, considering it, comparing it, wondering what it might mean. Never before had I attained this discriminate consciousness which functions on a plane where all discrimination seemed absurd. Then the tide ebbed slowly and I was left exhilarated, rested, refreshed.'

Christmas Humphreys.

Here Christmas Humphreys, one of the original founders of the London Buddhist Society seeks to describe an experience both startling and wonderful. Experiences such as this are not reserved for an exclusive, mystical elite. With the application of a little mindfulness everyone can have an enhanced experience of the present moment.

Years ago when I was a student at college, I was having a coming-of-age (or 21 st) birthday party with friends and flatmates. Some of the students who rented the flat above had come down to join the party. I was standing looking out of a large, old-fashioned window, looking across the darkened cityscape of evening when one of them told me that we should keep the sound down, because the old man who lived in the flat below was dying. Suddenly the incongruous fullness of the actuality of the old man dying at the same time as I was entering upon adulthood fused together into an eruption of completeness that doubled me over with its intensity.

When, eventually, I could straighten up, the view was changed. It had broadened to encompass half the globe. Each tiny movement upon it was engaged in a cosmic dance of rightness and interaction. The

crane that creaked in the far distance sang as melodiously as a lark. The child that cried in the night had a perfect right to 'be', 'here and now'.

Of course the immediacy and intensity of the experience faded, leaving behind a world dull and segmented. Then began the search. How could this wholeness be recaptured? In my heart I knew it existed in each and every present moment, but I couldn't reach it.

Robert Linssen says 'Reality is where we are from moment to moment' But how can we open ourselves to that reality? Over twenty years ago in England, instruction in meditation was almost impossible to find. Money to travel to the East was not available, so the world 'here and now' became my teacher.

Perhaps, I thought, if I looked closely enough, I could find that all-encompassing oneness in the cracks in the pavement; in the grey corruscations of the lampposts; in the acrid stench of the decomposing autumn leaves. Maybe it was there in the jarring clang of a doorbell or in the vast blue of the winter sky. Perhaps instead of moving automatically in response to a mental wish or command, if I watched each movement clearly, and each part of the movement as it was happening, perhaps then the present moment would reveal its secrets again.

Twenty years later, an important Thai meditation teacher Khun Mere Siri Krinchai said the most important thing for meditators to do, was to maintain bare awareness of the postures of the body, its movements and all sensations and thoughts that occur in the present moment.

I knew only that meditation meant looking within. Looking where within? What was going to remain constant? What could be the anchor point, the focus of awareness? The heart beat? No, that was too difficult to fix upon and too fast. Breathing? Yes that would do. So I stumbled upon a method of meditation which used the viscitudes of breathing as a point of focus and synchronously expanded awareness of the body.

Many years later, I was to find that this was the very method called 'Vipassana' or 'Insight' meditation.

So began an adventure, a journey into awareness, both frightening and exhilarating and ultimately releasing. What came to be experienced, transcended all that had occured before. Previous feelings of completeness were only a pale shadow of what was to come.

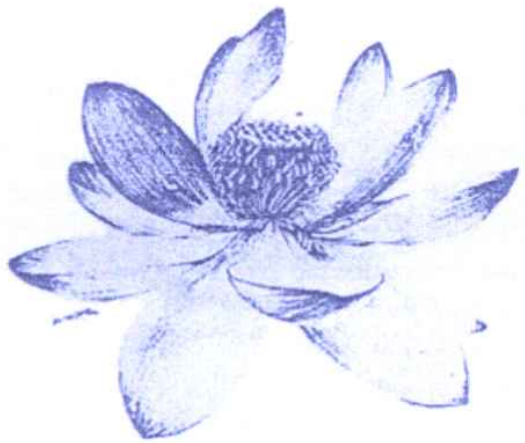
Later, in Buddhist temples, and in the university of the world, I studied Vipassana for many years. This book is a guide for those who do not have easy access to such teaching. It is meant for those who have been casting about in the dark, searching for that which will deepen and illuminate their experience of reality.

For those who see life as being full of unsatisfactoriness and suffering, and who sense that there must be a truth that transcends and gives meaning to existance; for those who wish to go into that truth, this book is a guide.

Although it is certainly possible to practise on your own, the personal guidance of a 'good friend in the Dhamma' is a great reassurance. The 'good friend' may be a Buddhist monk or nun or an experienced lay meditator.

The benefits of Vipassana meditation are manifold. Successful practice can lift depression, cure many stress-related diseases and at the very least add a little joy to life. It can help a harrassed housewife cope with a family of young children. It can help a person control his temper or do well in examinations. It can help to expand and intensify an artist's perception of the world. All of these benefits are side effects of the wisdom that arises during the practice of Vipassana meditation.

The practice of Vipassana meditation enables us to calm down and look within, in order to develop wisdom, through freedom from the sense of self. As Baba Ram Dass says 'The quieter you become the more you hear.'



A PRACTICAL INTRODUCTION TO VIPASSANA MEDITATION

Vipassana meditation is usually translated as 'Insight' meditation. It is the method of practice discovered by the Lord Buddha leading to his enlightenment over 2,500 years ago. It is not the only form of meditation practised by Buddhists. Other methods may be grouped under two general headings. 'Samatha' or 'Calmness' meditation and 'Loving Kindness' meditation.

When practising 'Loving Kindness' meditation the meditator may repeat a chant which directs feelings of loving kindness to all sentient beings. This type of meditation is best practised when the mind is pure and clear, for example at the end of a 'Vipassana' meditation session.

SAMATHA AND VIPASSANA MEDITATION

Mention should be made here about the difference between 'Samatha' or 'Calmness' meditation and 'Vipassana' or 'Insight' meditation.

Historically the techniques of 'Calmness' meditation precede those of 'Vipassana' meditation. The Lord Buddha spent many years following the techniques derived from Hinduism designed to increase and refine concentration to rarified levels. And Vipassana is dependent upon a certain level of concentration. Control and direction are essential, but are not the ultimate aim of Vipassana meditation. Concentration is one of the tools necessary in order to experience insight but Vipassana is 'inclusive'. It does not exclude any part of the experience of 'here and now'. On the other hand the mind dwells in equanimity. Whatever occurs is accepted, noticed, and observed as it changes and passes away.

Briefly 'Calmness' meditation is 'exclusive'. Concentration is focused upon one object to the exclusion of all else. Very deep states of absorption may be experienced, but although these may be deeply satisfying, they do not constitute 'Nibbana' or 'enlightenment'.

The meditator practising 'Samatha' or 'Calmness' meditation may use any of forty subjects of meditation in order to control and still the movements of the mind. These forty subjects may be subdivided into seven main groups.

1) Ten Kasinas eg. The colour 'yellow' or 'light'.

2) Ten Asubhas (Objects of Impurity) eg. 'a swollen corpse' or 'a skeleton'.

3) Six Anussatis (Recollections) eg. 'The Recollection of Peace' and the Four Satis eg. Mindfulness of Breathing.

4) Four Brahmaviharas (Excellent Qualities) eg. 'Compassion' or 'Sympathy'.

5) The Four Formless Spheres eg. 'The Sphere of Infinite Space'.

6) The Perception of the Loathsomeness of Nutriment.

7) The Analysis of the Four Elements.

'Insight' or 'Vipassana' meditation is 'inclusive'. It is based upon good concentration and energy levels. Whatever occurs in the realms of materiality and mentality is accepted and noticed with bare awareness, as it comes into being and passes away. The mind dwelling in equanimity is not disturbed by anything and so insight into truth is gained through direct experience.

An American meditator who practised at Wat Mahadhatu John Coleman, wrote of the system of Vipassana : 'The students are instructed to make continuous observations and acknowledgements of all the various functions, actions, and perceptions of the body and mind. There are walking and breathing exercises in which the students are required to maintain a constant awareness of themselves. These exercises lead to knowledge of self, insight and peace of mind.'

The objects of Vipassana meditation are the position of the body at the present moment plus all sensations, feelings and thoughts which arise as a result of the contact between body and mind and the environment or the interaction between body and mind at the point when it occurs.

THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH

Before talking about Vipassana meditation in detail it should be mentioned that 'Meditation' in all its forms is included in the Nobel Eightfold Path. A person will not be able to meditate successfully if his life style is not conducive to the practice. The Noble Eightfold Path is the way that leads to the extinction of suffering. It is divided into 3 main groups. Morality 'Sīla', Concentration, 'Samādhi'. and Wisdom 'Paññā'.

The first group : 'Morality' comprises Right Speech (sammā-vācā) Right Action (sammā-Kammanta) and Right Livelihood (sammā-ājīva)

The second group : 'Concentration' comprises : Right effort (sammā vāyāma), Right-mindfulness (sammā-sati) and Right concentration (samma- samādhi)

The third group : 'Wisdom' or Paññā is composed of Right understanding (sammā-ditthi) and Right view (sammā-sānkappa)

Let me describe these in more detail quoting at length from Ven. Dr. H. Saddhatissa :

(1) Right Understanding

To begin treading the Path we must see life as it is, in accordance with its three characteristics of impermanence, suffering and selflessness; we must possess a clear understanding of the nature of existence, of the moral law, of the factors and component elements which go to make up the continuing round of birth and death.

(2) Right Thought

This means that our mind should be pure, free from sensory desire, ill-will, cruelty and the like. At the same time, we should be willing to relinquish anything that obstructs our mental and psychological progress.

(3) Right Speech

Correct speech should not be unduly loud or excitable, not prompted by prejudices, ill-will or selfish interests. It should not be such as to inflame passions or arouse the emotions.

(4) Right Action

This generally consists of observing the Five Precepts, which can be shown in both their positive and negative aspects : 1. Not to kill, but to practise love and harmlessness to all. 2. not to take that which is not given, but to practise charity and generosity, 3. Not to misuse the senses but to practise purity and self-control. 4. Not to indulge in

wrong speech, but to practise sincerity and honesty. 5. Not to participate in taking any intoxicating drinks or drugs which cause heedlessness but to practise restraint and mindfulness. For the ordinary disciple, moreover, it is essential for him to practise all these injunctions if he wishes to aspire to the higher life.

(5) Right Livelihood or Vocation

The layman should only pursue an occupation that does not cause harm or injustice to other beings. He shold have a sense of service and duty in life.

(6) Right Effort

Self - perfection can be achieved by avoiding and rejecting unhealthy qualities while acquiring and fostering skilful qualities. This stage is subdivided into 4 parts: (1) The effort to prevent the arising of unskilled thoughts, words and deeds which have not yet arisen. (2) the effort to expel that unskill which has already been and which is present (3) the effort to induce healthy thoughts, words and actions, (4) the effort to cultivate all the good words, thoughts and actions which are already present.

(7) Right Mindfulness

This implies a state of constant awareness with regard to the (1) body, (11) feelings (III) mind, and (IV) ideas engendered therein. Mind according to Buddhism is the 6th sense and nothing more. The development of this type of mindfulness is necessary to enable the practitioner not to be led astray by erroneous views.

(8) Right Concentration

At the final stage, we should aim at one-pointedness of mind directed towards a wholesome object. To do this, we should sit quietly, with tranquil mind, and, if vagrant thoughts arise, patiently regulate the mind anew stopping and expelling them. Breathe naturally, the breaths must not be controlled or interfered with in any way otherwise it is impossible to understand the important message they have to tell. Devices like counting are usually necessary at first to ensure concentration and absorption but can be discarded once we have got a firm grip of our minds and can prevent them from wandering away from the task in hand.

The practice of 'Vipassana' or 'Insight' meditation is dependent upon a moral life-stye and right views and understanding. It is not necessary to withdraw totally from the world to practise 'Insight' meditation because it is by its very nature 'inclusive'. However for periods of intensive practice, being freed from the immediate demands of family and working life is essential.

'Vipassana' 'Insight' meditation can be practised by all, irrespective of nationality, religion, sex or age.

WHAT TO DO AT A VIPASSANA MEDITATION CENTRE

If you go to a Vipassana meditation centre you will be expected to keep the eight precepts, to wear white clothes and to follow the instructions of your teacher diligently. When a meditator enters a meditation centre and he or she asks the meditation instructor for permission to practice meditation at the centre, the instructor will expect the meditator to repeat the eight precepts after him vowing to keep them during the period of seclusion.

THE EIGHT PRECEPTS

The eight precepts or 'Uposatha-Sîla' can be translated as :

1) Abstinence from killing any living beings.
2) Abstinence from stealing.
3) Abstinence from unchastity..
4) Abstinence from false speech.
5) Abstinence from intoxicants.
6) Abstinence from eating solid food after mid-day.
7) Abstinence from dancing, singing, music and shows, garlands, scents, cosmetics, adornment etc.
8) Abstinence from luxurious and high seats and beds.

These eight precepts constitute a firm moral base to facilitate the intensive practice of Vipassana 'Insight' meditation.

PAYING HOMAGE TO THE TRIPLE GEM

After asking for the five or eight precepts and repeating them after your teacher, the meditator pays homage to the Triple Gem in this way :

"Imāhaṁ Bhagavā attabhavaṁ Tumhākaṁ pariccajāmi"

"Master, may I pay homage for the purpose of practising Insight meditation (Vipassana) from this moment on."

The meditator pays respect to the meditation instructor saying :

"Imāham Ājariya attabhāvaṁ Tumhākaṁ pariccajāmi"

"Venerable teacher may I show respect to you, for the purpose of practising Insight meditation (Vipassana) from this moment on.

"The meditator asks for meditation instruction as follows : -

"Nibbānassa me bhante sacchikaranatthaya kammaṭṭhānaṁ dehi"

"Master, will you give me instruction for Insight meditation (Vipassana) so that I may comprehend the Path, the Fruition and Nibbana later?"

Then the meditator extends 'Loving Kindness' (Metta) to all beings in a way such as this :

"May I and all beings be happy, free from suffering, free from longing for revenge, free from troubles, difficulties and dangers and be protected from all misfortune. May no being suffer loss. All beings have their own Kamma, have Kamma as origin; have Kamma as heredity; have Kamma as refuge; whatever Kamma one performs, be it good or bad, returns to one."

Then the meditator contemplates death thus :

"Our lives are transient and death is certain. That being so, we are fortunate to have entered upon the practice of Insight meditation (Vipassana) on this occasion, because now we have not been born in vain and have not missed the opportunity to practise the Dhamma."

PREPARATION FOR MEDITATION

The instructor will then assign various walking, sitting and lying down exercises which gradually and synchronously build up concentration and energy levels, increasing the meditator's mindfulness or 'Sati'. It is important to bear in mind that Vipassana meditation does not cease at the completion of, for instance, a 30 minute period of sitting meditation. Conversely, mindfulness should be maintained at all times, not only when carrying out specific walking or sitting exercises. Therefore the meditator tries to be aware of every movement he makes, every thought that arises, each sound that arises, of eating, drinking, getting dressed and so on. However, at the start of a meditation

retreat this is difficult in practice. We have years of conditioning to overcome. Especially if we live in a city, we would not be able to function under such a sensory overload in daily life. So a kind of censorship occurs, filtering out our awareness of much that is occuring, leaving us just enough information to enable us to deal with the task of crossing a six-lane highway, for instance. Usually these filters are operational for most of our lives. We are living in a room with the curtains drawn. We have a very 'partial' view of existence.

When mindfulness increases 'the curtains' are gradually drawn back and our experience of the 'here are now' becomes immeasurably richer, and gradually insight into the real nature of existence arises.

Now let me give some very simple instructions for the first day of practice of Vipassana meditation. It is recommended that the meditator wears comfortable clothes which are neither too loose nor too tight. Thai meditators who stay at the temple and keep the 8 precepts usually wear white clothes, to signify their homelessness and purity. However it is not necessary that the clothes be white.

All the exercises which follow should be regarded as methods to increase mindfulness, concentration and energy. The aim is to become clearly aware of all that is experienced at the present moment. It is not essential to follow the movements absolutely rigidly. What is essential is that the meditator focuses and maintains mindfulness on all that happens, all that is experienced in the present moment.

However some confusion may arise if instructions are too broad. We need a clear system of signposting or else an inexperienced meditator may become 'lost' in the vastness of sensations and thoughts.

For this reason very detailed instructions for each of the exercises are given. If however your movements (in the walking exercises for instance) deviate slightly from the norm, but mindfulness is maintained at all times, the exercise is being completed correctly. The aim is not a tightly synchronised slow-motion ballet, but it is to systematically open awareness to the present moment and all that it contains.

Detailed instructions will be given for the first walking exercise. There are six walking exercises in which awareness of the movement of the feet becomes progressively refined. In the first exercise the raising, moving and lowering of each foot is one movement. In the second exercise the movement is seen in two stages, in the third exercise, it is seen as having three stages and so on.

THE FIRST WALKING EXERCISE

Before walking stand erect with the legs straight, the feet close together and your hands at your sides. Lift your left hand and put it in the preferred position mindfully. Move slowly, feeling the movement distinctly and making the following mental acknowledgements synchronously with the parts of the movement As you lift your left arm say in mind (or out loud if you are practising with a group) 'lifting'; as you move your forearm towards your body, say in mind 'moving towards'; and as you rest your hand on your abdomen, say in mind 'Setting down'. Do the same as you move your right arm.

THE POSITION OF THE HANDS

Several hand positions are recommended. The hands may be loosely clasped in front of you, with the arms fairly straight. Or the arms may be bent so that the hands rest on your 'tummy'. Alternatively your hands may be loosely clasped behind you. Or your arms may be folded across your chest. If the duration of the walking exercise is fairly short it is usually unnecessary to change the position of the hands, however if the walking meditation is prolonged you may change the position of the hands. Remember, though, to acknowledge in mind 'intending to change' three times before you start making a movement. Then as you move your arms, keep mindfulness fixed on the movement. Move one arm first followed by the other, at the same time making mental acknowledgements eg. 'lifting', 'moving', 'setting down'.

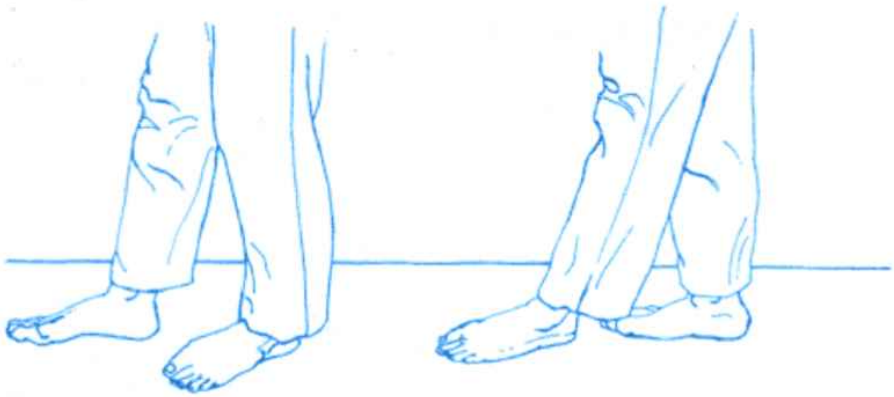
STANDING AND WALKING

Next be mindful of the standing position. Try to be aware of 'body' standing, not 'I' am standing. The head should be held upright and the eyes focused at a point about 2 metres ahead. Make mental acknowledgements like this : Focus awareness on the top of the head and make a mental sweep down the body to the soles of your feet, saying in mind, at the same time,'STANDING'. Make a mental sweep in an upwards direction from the soles of the feet to the top of the head, saying in mind 'STANDING'. A third time, make the knowledgement 'STANDING' as mindfulness moves down from the top of the head to the soles of the feet.

At first it is quite difficult to be clearly aware of the standing posture because no physical movement is occuring, but gradually the mental sweep of mindfulness will become clearer.

Mindfulness is now focused on the feet, keep it there and try to be aware of the tension in your feet accompanying the desire to walk, synchronously saying in mind 'INTENDING TO WALK, INTENDING TO WALK, INTENDING TO WALK'.

The gaze should now be lowered slightly and fixed a little in front of the foot that is moving or up to about one and a half metres ahead. The head may be very slightly bent. It is usual to start with the right foot when practising in a group, because the instructor leads the acknowledgements out loud. Lift the right foot about 3 inches from the floor, move it forward, keeping it at an even distance of about 3 inches from the floor, and then set it down about 5 or 6 inches in front of the left foot. Focus attention on the movement of the foot from the moment it is lifted until it is set down, simultaneously making the acknowledgement 'RIGHT GOES THUS' The movement of the foot is perceived as continuous, and is not divided into separate stages. When the left foot is being lifted, moved and set down, be aware of the movement and simultaneously say in mind 'LEFT GOES THUS' The acknowledgement should neither precede nor lag behind the movement. Continue walking, with awareness focused on the movement of the feet until coming to the end of the walk space. Put your feet together on the last step.



RIGHT GOES THUS *LEFT GOES THUS*

Be mindful of standing as before, making 3 acknowledgements of 'STANDING'. Be clearly aware of 'body' standing and make 3 mental sweeps from head to toe, toe to head and again from head to toe.

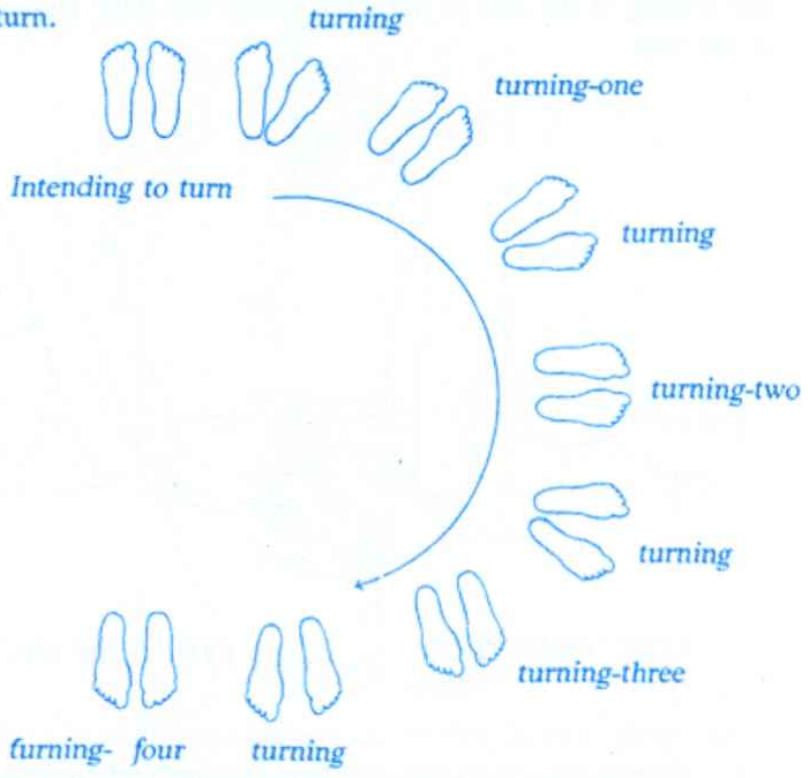
TURNING

Keeping attention on the feet try to feel the tension there as you become aware of the wish to turn. Make three mental acknowledgements while being aware of wanting to turn ie. 'INTENDING TO TURN, INTENDING TO TURN, INTENDING TO TURN'

For the first three walking exercises, turning is usually divided into four sections. Turn right. Move your right foot clockwise keeping your heel on the ground, but lifting your toes, saying in mind 'TURN' and as you put your toes down, you say in mind 'ING' The angle of movement should be about 45°

Next lift your left foot straight up about 3″, saying in mind 'TURN'. Then put it down parallel to the right foot, saying in mind 'ING'. Then say 'one'.

Make four pairs of movements in this way in order to complete a 180° turn.



TURNING : FOUR STAGES

note, the right heel revolves on the same spot throughout.

Having turned, keeping attention focused on the movements of the feet at all times, again be mindful of 'STANDING' and 'INTENDING TO WALK' as before.

This first walking exercise should be practised until the meditator can achieve good concentration. At first the instructor may pace the exercise, calling out the acknowledgements. But when the meditator practises privately the acknowledgements are not made out-loud, and the meditator will pace himself. This exercise may continue for up to 30 minutes.

While performing the walking exercises attention should be trained on the movements of the feet. It should not be on the sound of the words. The acknowledgements should be made contemporaneously with the movements, not before or after them.

One of the benefits of walking meditation is that it enables the meditator to accumulate energy and increase mindfulness, allowing him or her to maintain concentration more easily during the sitting exercises.

Some teachers say that the length of time spent on walking meditation should be longer than that spent on sitting meditation. Other teachers place the emphasis differently. What is essential is that there should be a balance between the two forms of exercise. Gradually you will come to know how to maintain your own equilibrium. If you are a person who can concentrate well but sometimes gets tired easily, a slightly longer time spent on walking would probably be beneficial. At first be guided by your instructor.

It is a good idea to arrange the place where you will sit before you start to walk so that on completion of the walking exercise you can move slowly and mindfully into a sitting position without distractions. Imagine that you are carrying a bowl brim full of the 'Sati' or mindfulness that has been accumulated during the walking exercise, if you make unmindful movements or your mind starts wandering during the change from walking to sitting, some of that energy will spill over the edge of the bowl and be lost.

CHANGING POSITION

You can divide your movements as you sit down into stages and make acknowledgements for each stage. This is not essential as

long as mindfulness is constantly maintained. If you find your mindfulness falters unless you have a definitive series of sub-tasks to follow, the following may be helpful : -

At the completion of walking meditation, stand erect and be mindful of 'body' standing as before. Attempt to be aware of 'body' from the top of your head to the soles of your feet, simultaneously saying in mind 'STANDING'. Then reverse the mental sweep saying in mind 'STANDING' again. As you make the acknowledgement 'STANDING' for the third time, move awareness from head to toe again.

Next try to be aware of wanting to sit. Make three mental acknowledgements 'INTENDING TO SIT, INTENDING TO SIT, INTENDING TO SIT'.

After this move slowly and mindfully to your place. You may say in mind 'RIGHT' as your right foot moves and 'LEFT' as your left foot moves.

When standing in the correct position to start sitting down, move your hands mindfully to a suitable position to help you sit down. This is usually hanging straight by your sides. The following acknowledgements may be made. As you lift whichever hand is uppermost, say in mind 'LIFTING'. As you move your arm downwards, say in mind 'DROPPING'. As then as you let go of the tension in your arm, say in mind 'RELEASING'. Do the same with the other arm.

If you are going to sit on the floor the following system of movements and acknowledgements can be employed. If however, you prefer to sit on a chair, adaptations will have to be made. Remember it's not necessary to follow this series of sub-actions in the precise order given here, the important thing is to maintain mindfulness of all actions made at all times, by making mental acknowledgements at each stage of the action.

Those with rheumatism in your knees may need to put your hands down first to help to support you as you move down. This is fine, but be clearly aware of putting your hands down as you are putting them down, making your own private acknowledgement, notwithstanding the fact that the group in general are making a different movement.

Here is a list of possible actions and acknowledgements to be made : -

You are standing ready to sit down with your feet together and the mat behind you. Move your left foot backwards about 30 cm, saying in mind 'MOVING BACK' Start bending your knees, saying in mind 'DOWN'.

This acknowledgement can be made about 5 times as you move down until, as your left knee touches the ground, the mental acknowledgement 'TOUCHING' is made.

PUTTING DOWN
TOUCHING

The left hand is now placed on the floor near the left knee to support the body as the right leg is moved. As the hand is moved say in mind 'PUTTING DOWN : TOUCHING'.

MOVING
TOUCHING

The right leg is now moved back so that it is in line with the left. Make the acknowledgement 'MOVING' as this is happening.

When the right knee touches the floor, say in mind 'TOUCHING'.

Next move the left hand backwards about 25 cm, say in mind 'MOVING BACK' and as the hand touches the floor 'TOUCHING'. As the weight moves on to the hand say in mind 'PRESSING'.

MOVING BACK
TOUCHING
PRESSING

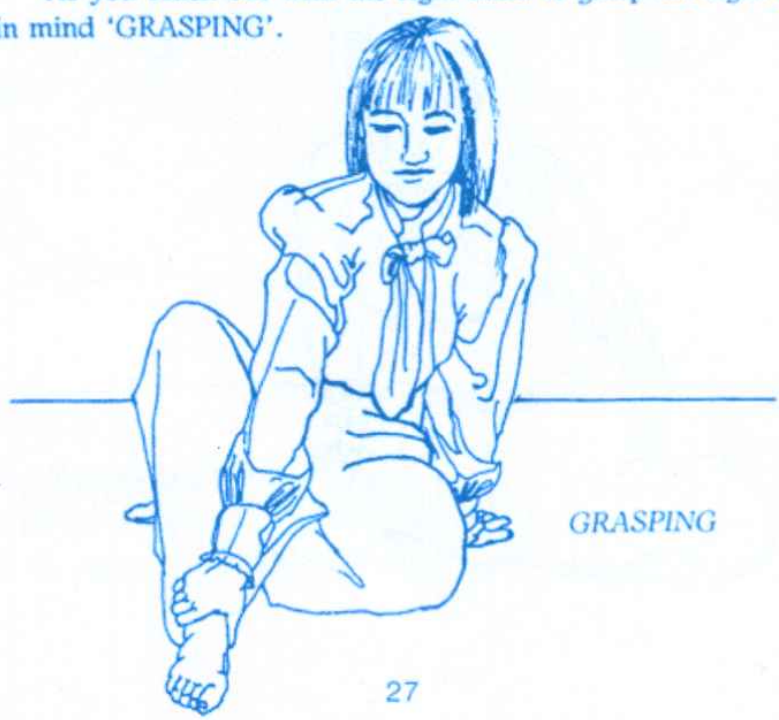
Move down so that your buttocks touch your ankles saying in mind 'SITTING DOWN'

SITTING DOWN

At this point the left foot needs to be moved diagonally to the right in order to be in a suitable place to enable you to sit in a lotus position, or cross-legged, as you like. As the foot is moved make the mental acknowledgement 'MOVING'. You will now be sitting with legs folded to the right. Next lift the right knee and move the right foot forwards, saying in mind 'MOVING'.

MOVING

As you reach out with the right hand to grasp the right ankle, say in mind 'GRASPING'.



GRASPING

LIFTING

As you lift the right foot to place it on the floor near the left knee, say in mind 'LIFTING'. As you move your foot across say in mind 'MOVING'.

MOVING
SETTING DOWN

At the point where your foot touches the floor, make the mental acknowledgement 'SETTING DOWN'

If you wish to sit in the half lotus position or full lotus position, make the following acknowledgements as you move your legs.
'GRASPING, LIFTING, SETTING DOWN'.

SITTING WITH THE LEGS
IN THE HALF-LOTUS POSITION

When performing the sitting exercises it is essential that the spine should be erect, and the circulation not obstructed. It is not necessary to sit in a full lotus position or even cross-legged, although these position are very stable and easy to maintain. Older people or westerners unused to sitting on the floor, may prefer to sit on a chair. However the meditator's back should be straight and not supported by the back of the chair, and there should be ample room to rest the arms with the hands in the correct position.

THE POSITION OF THE HANDS WHEN SITTING

The hands should be held loosely on the lap with the right ıd on the left hand. The tips of the thumbs may be touching. So en moving your hands to the right position again endeavour to intain mindfulness like this : -

Lifting

Moving towards

Turning over

Dropping

As you lift your left hand, make the mental acknowledgement 'LIFTING'. As you move the left forearm towards the body, say in mind 'MOVING TOWARDS'. As the left hand is turned over say in mind 'TURNING OVER'. As the hand is moved downwards, say in mind 'DROPPING' and as the hand is placed on the lap, say in mind 'SETTING DOWN'.

The same procedure holds for the right hand which is finally placed on the left hand. At this point you may wish to shift position to get comfortable, if so, make the mental acknowledgement 'GETTING COMFORTABLE'. If you wear spectacles, remove them, place them on the floor and return your hand to the right position mindfully.

Say in mind 'CLOSING' as you close your eyes. Then turn your mind inward, putting attention on the movements of the abdomen when breathing.

SITTING MEDITATION

When meditating, be aware of the sinking in and bulging out of the diaphragm when breathing. The chest is usually kept at rest. Diaphragm breathing occurs when the body is at rest and the mind is not too emotional. Be aware of the rising and falling of the abdomen only, and not the passage of the air through the nostrils. Initially if

the meditator finds it difficult to fix attention on the movement of the abdomen various aids can be employed, such as wearing a tight belt or rubbing some balm on the spot on the abdomen where attention is to be fixed.

For the first sitting exercise, be mindful of the movement of the abdomen in two stages. When the abdomen rises, say in mind 'RISING' and when it falls, say in mind, 'FALLING'.

RISING FALLING

Do not try to control the movements but be aware of the movements as they occur naturally. It is very easy to fall into a chant and to lose track of the movements. If this happens, at the point where awareness returns, say in mind 'KNOWING, KNOWING, KNOWING' and return your attention to the movements of the abdomen.

While practising Vipassana meditation, if a sound occurs acknowledge in mind 'HEARING, HEARING, HEARING' and when the sound dies away return the attention to the movement of the abdomen. If your attention 'follows' the sound, at the point that you become aware of what has happened say in mind 'KNOWING, KNOWING, KNOWING' and return your attention to the main object of meditation, ie. the movement of the abdomen.

Similarly if there is a smell, acknowledge in mind 'SMELLING, SMELLING, SMELLING'. If something is seen, either externally or internally say in mind 'SEEING, SEEING, SEEING' While tasting, acknowledge the taste 'TASTING TASTING, TASTING'. When experiencing a cold, hot soft or hard touch, acknowledge it in mind 'TOUCHING, TOUCHING, TOUCHING'. Thinking is dealt with in the same way as the senses. It is not assigned greater importance. So while thinking, acknowledge in mind 'THINKING, THINKING, THINKING'.

If a feeling occurs,try not to be affected by it in any way, but simply acknowledge it in the same way 'FEELING, FEELING, FEELING'. This remains the same whether the feeling is positive or negative, strong or weak. Try not to be drawn by any sensation, feeling or thought, but simply use 'mindfulness' or in other words 'bare awareness' to acknowledge whatever occurs.

Because some of the sensations that occur may be unfamiliar or very intense it is easy to assign them greater importance than everyday occurances and so wish to stay with them, or to avoid them. Attempt to maintain equanimity and deal with all that occurs simply by acknowledgement, without prejudice or partiality, and return your attention to the main object.

The length of the first sitting exercise is usually determined by the instructor, but the time is gradually increased as proficiency increases. 20 minutes is usually sufficient for the first sessions. The timing does not have to be 'to the minute'. It is not necessary to use a stop watch or alarm clock. Before starting an exercise, say in mind 'I am going to meditate for 20 minutes or whatever length of time you require, and you will find that the timing will happen automatically.

Vipassana meditation is 'inclusive'. The exercises are intended to gradually and systematically build up concentration and energy levels through bare awareness of all that occurs in the present moment, so that the meditator may have direct experience of the ultimate truth or Nibbana.

BARE AWARENESS

When asked to define the basic message of Buddhism, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu answered quoting a saying of the Buddha himself. 'Nothing whatsoever should be grasped at or clung to'. When practising Insight meditation by noticing and acknowledging with bare awareness, we are simply using this method to train ourselves not to grasp and not to cling to anything. It is not usually possible for a person whose whole life time has conditioned him to grasp and cling, to stop, simply because he realizes it would be a good thing to do. The walking, sitting and lying down exercises are just a systematic method to enable us to, as the Buddha taught : 'When seeing, just see. When hearing, just hear. When smelling an odour, just smell it. When tasting, just taste. When experiencing a tactile sensation, just experience it. When sensing a mental object, just sense it. Let things stop right there and insight will function automatically'.

Many people ask 'Why do we have to keep making all these mental acknowledgements ?'. At first it is necessary to discipline and control the mind in order to bring about an optimum level of concentration. In Insight meditation the aim is neither to forceably exclude sensations or thoughts, nor to repress them but to see clearly how they arise, have being and pass away. A certain level of concentration and energy is necessary to keep them in our sphere of attention. Without this level of concentration our minds jump all over the place, never attending fully to any one object. This is often described as a 'monkey mind'. We need to give the 'monkey' a definitive task to do so that his attention span increases and control improves. It is very difficult to stop your mind 'jumping around' simply by an effort of will. The method of slowing down movements and making simple mental acknowledgements is a very effective tool to enable us to 'have stability, unshakeability and equilibrium', so that we are eventually able to 'When seeing just see. When hearing just hear.'

HOW TO DEAL WITH DISTRACTIONS

When practising walking, sitting or lying down meditation if a sound occurs, be aware of the sound and say in mind 'HEARING : HEARING, HEARING' and then return to the main object of meditation. In walking the main object is the movement of the feet. When standing the main object is the position of the body. When sitting it is the rising and falling movements of the abdomen etc.

Deal with other disturbances in the same way. Notice them with mindfulness and make appropriate mental acknowledgements. For example while walking you may start thinking about a problem at work. Try to catch the thought as it arises, do not think this is a good thought or a bad thought, don't attempt to follow the thought to its logical conclusion, don't get angry with yourself for not being able to keep to the main object, but, simply make the mental acknowledgement 'THINKING, THINKING, THINKING'. Then return your attention to the movement of the feet.

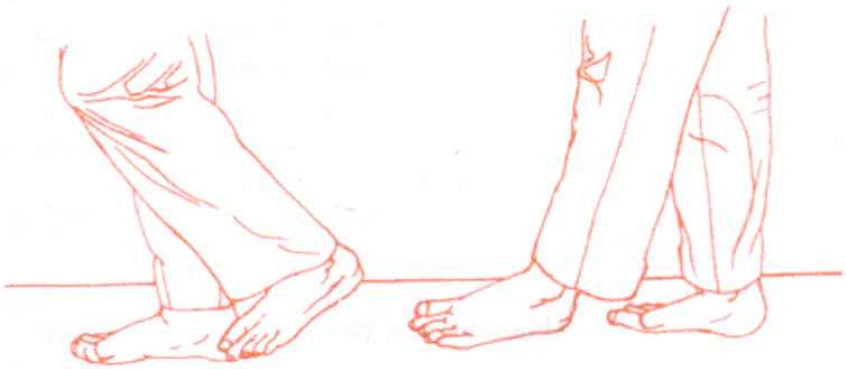
Suppose you are sitting and your leg starts to go numb. Don't move your leg. Instead put your attention fully on the place where the numb feeling is occuring and say in mind 'FEELING, FEELING, FEELING' and the sensation will probably diminish and maybe go away completely. If there is a feeling of pain, deal with it in the same way. Try not to move immediately, try not to start thinking about the pain, try not to ignore it, simply fix attention clearly on the place where pain is occuring and say in mind 'FEELING, FEELING, FEELING'. If after many acknowledgements the pain does not diminish and becomes unbearable you may move. However, it is necessary to do this mindfully. First say in mind 'INTENDING TO MOVE' three times. Then slowly and mindfully move to a new position, saying in mind 'MOVING, MOVING, MOVING'. As a feeling of well-being or relief arises, say in mind 'FEELING, FEELING, FEELING' and return to the main object.

When meditating for a short time each day, really painful feelings do not usually develop, However in a period of intense meditation, over a week or a month for example, the first few days are often extremely uncomfortable. This is a natural occurance as concentration and mindfulness are in the process of building up to the optumium level. As the meditator makes further progress, the feeling of unbearable discomfort diminishes of its own accord.

THE SECOND WALKING EXERCISE

At the point when the meditator can maintain bare awareness for the period set for walking meditation, without many distractions caused by a wandering mind, the second walking exercise is introduced.

In this exercise the meditator is mindful of the movement of each foot in two stages. As the right foot is lifted, focus attention on that foot and make the mental acknowledgement 'LIFTING'. The foot should be lifted to about 3″ from the ground trying not to show the sole of your foot to the person behind. Then slowly move the foot forward keeping it at an even distance of 3″ from the ground. No acknowledgement is made at this stage but try to keep mindfulness on the movement of the foot. As the foot is lowered to the floor and touches the floor, say in mind 'TREADING'. The process is identical for the left foot. In this exercise it is not necessary to make a distinction between right and left. The first walking exercise may be practised for 20 to 30 minutes followed by the second exercise for a further 20 or 30 minutes. However, if you are short of time, the period of time may be shortened. For example if you can spare only 40 minutes for meditation, you could spend 10 minutes on the first walking exercise and 10 minutes on the second, followed by 20 minutes of sitting meditation.

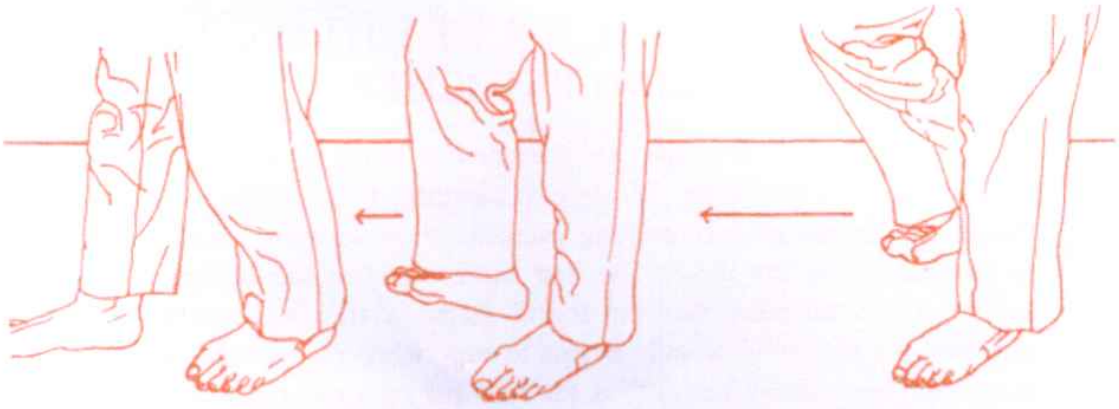


LIFTING *TREADING*

THE THIRD WALKING EXERCISE

In the third walking exercise the movement of the feet is divided into three stages. As the left or right foot is lifted, say in mind 'LIFTING'. As the foot is moving forward, say in mind 'MOVING', and as the foot touches the floor, say in mind 'TREADING'. To recap, the three stages of the third walking exercise are 'LIFTING': MOVING: TREADING'. The instructions for standing, intending or wanting to walk, at the start of the path, and for standing, intending to turn and turning at the far end of path remain the same as in the first exercise. Practise the first walking exercise, ' LEFT GOES THUS: RIGHT GOES THUS' for 10 to 20 minutes. Then practise the second walking exercise: 'LIFTING: TREADING' for a further 10 to 20 minutes followed by the third exercise 'LIFTING: MOVING: TREADING' for 10 to 20 minutes. Then move mindfully into a sitting position.

Remember that walking and sitting meditation exercises are alternated because they are mutually beneficial. The walking exercises help to increase energy and the sitting exercises help to increase concentration. Both are necessary if 'Sati' or mindfulness is to increase.



TREADING *MOVING* *LIFTING*

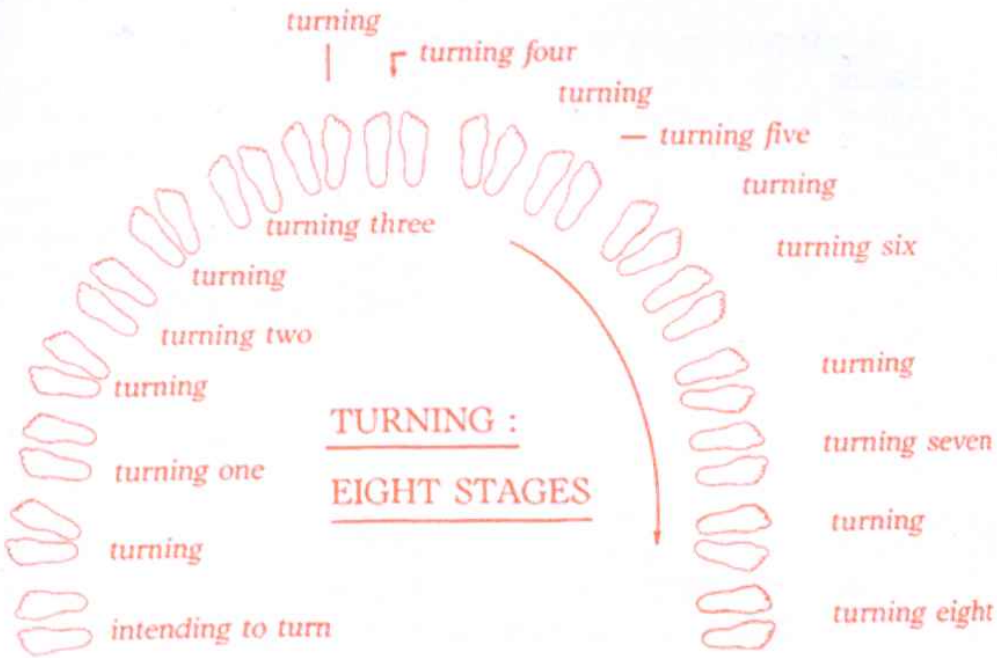
THE FOURTH WALKING EXERCISE

The fourth walking exercise is as follows: As the left or right foot is lifted, be aware of the heel going up and say in mind 'HEEL UP'. Next focus attention on the lifting movement of the whole foot and say in mind 'LIFTING'. As the foot moves forward make the acknowledgement 'MOVING' and as the foot touches the ground, acknowledge 'TREADING'. Again exercises 1 to 3 should each be practised for 10 minutes each before continuing to exercise 4 which should be practised for 10 to 20 minutes.

TREADING *MOVING* *LIFTING* *HEEL UP*

TURNING, IN THE FOURTH TO SIXTH WALKING EXERCISES

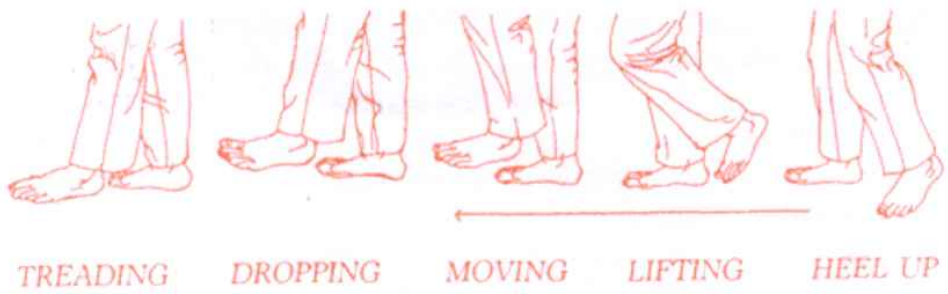
The walking exercises are designed to build up concentration and mindfulness gradually. In the first exercise, there is one stage of movement. In the second walking exercise, there are two stages and in the third there are three. The first three exercises are designed to build up concentration, but the fourth marks a transition point. At this time the meditator usually begins to experience real insight knowledge. In this exercise, not only is the forward movement divided into 4 stages but the awareness of turning is also refined. Instead of turning with four pairs of foot movements, the 180° turn is now made with eight pairs of foot movements. The angle of each section is approximately 22°.



note, the right heel revolves on the same spot throughout.

THE FIFTH WALKING EXERCISE

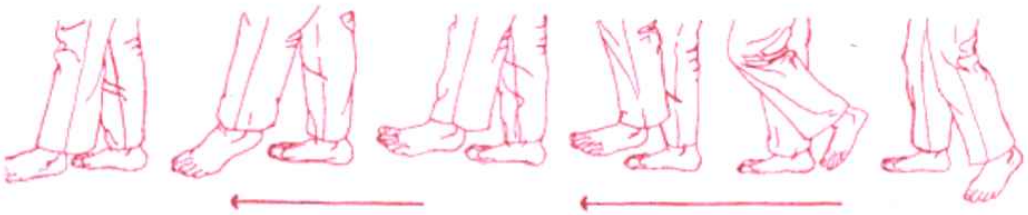
The acknowledgements for the fifth walking exercise are 'HEEL UP: LIFTING: MOVING: DROPPING: TREADING'. In this case the downward movement of the foot is divided into two stages. Be aware of the downward movement before the foot makes contact with the floor as 'DROPPING' and be aware of the foot making contact with the floor as 'TREADING' Remember to turn making eight pairs of foot movements. Exercises 1 to 4 are practised first, each for 10 minutes followed by the fifth exercise for 10 to 20 minutes.



TREADING *DROPPING* *MOVING* *LIFTING* *HEEL UP*

THE SIXTH WALKING EXERCISE

The sixth walking exercise has the following acknowledgements 'HEEL UP: LIFTING: MOVING: DROPPING: TOUCHING: PRESSING'. After acknowledging the contact of the foot with the floor, focus awareness on the weight moving on to the foot as you move forward and simultaneously say in mind 'PRESSING'. There are eight pairs of foot movements when turning. Exercises 1 to 5 are practised first for 10 minutes each, followed by the sixth for 20 minutes.



PRESSING TOUCHING DROPPING MOVING LIFTING HEEL UP

The complete sequence takes about one hour. Note: The instructor will determine the point where the meditator should progress from one walking exercise to the next.

To recap, the acknowledgements for the six walking exercises are : For all levels. STANDING: INTENDING TO WALK: STANDING: INTENDING TO TURN: TURNING: INTENDING TO WALK.

For exercise one : LEFT GOES THUS: RIGHT GOES THUS.
For exercise two : LIFTING: TREADING.
For exercise three : LIFTING: MOVING: TREADING.
For exercise four : HEEL UP: LIFTING: MOVING: TREADING.
For exercise five : HEEL UP: LIFTING: MOVING: DROPPING: TREADING.
For exercise six : HEEL UP: LIFTING: MOVING: DROPPING: TOUCHING: PRESSING.

Walking meditation exercises are alternated with sitting meditation exercises. The transition from walking to sitting should be made smoothly and mindfully. Be mindful of the intention to sit and of the actual sitting down movement. Try not to be distracted or to let your attention wander at this point.

Phra Debvedi writes 'In Vipassana, Sati focuses on the object and fastens it to the mind, or maintains the mind on the object, the aim is to use the mind as a place to lay the object down for examination and contemplation by the wisdom-faculty. One takes hold of the object in order to let a paññā investigate and analyse it, using the firm and stable mind as one's laboratory'.

MINDFULNESS AT ALL TIMES

In Vipassana or Insight meditation an effort should be made to maintain mindfulness at all times, whatever is being done. If the meditator is opening a door, for example, He or she attempts to be aware of the tension inherent in the body accompanying the intention to open the door. The meditator makes the mental acknowledgement 'INTENDING TO OPEN THE DOOR'.As he or she reaches out to touch the door handle, the mental acknowledgement 'REACHING OUT' is made. As the handle is being touched the mental acknowledgement 'TOUCHING'is made. Likewise with 'TURNING' 'PULLING' 'PUSHING', 'GOING THROUGH', 'REACHING OUT' 'TOUCHING' 'CLOSING'.

When the meditator is cleaning his or her teeth, eating, drinking, getting dressed, going up or down stairs or making any other movement, he or she tries to move slowly and mindfully at all times.

A famous meditation teacher Khun Mere Siri Krinchai ascribes first importance to bare awareness of the position and actions of the body at all times. It is necessary to keep one's mindfulness constant, and acknowledge every activity of the body and mind without letting mindfulness slip, slowly and without agitation.

If a sound occurs, focus your attention on the sound and acknowledge it saying in mind 'HEARING: HEARING: HEARING'. Try to maintain bare awareness, not allowing yourself to be drawn by the sound or to feel aversion to it. Deal with other sensations, feelings and thoughts in the same way. Mindfully notice them as they arise, come into being and pass away, Acknowledge them without partiality or prejudice, maintaining an attitude of equanimity at all times. Ideas or thoughts are viewed as neither more important nor less important than sensations or feelings. Venerable Jagaro, the Abbot of Bodhinyana monastery writes 'allow your attitude to change into that of witnessing the flow of mental conditions without criticism or praise'.

THE SECOND SITTING EXERCISE

The Ven. Phra Dhamma Theerarach Mahamuni the late Chief Meditation Master of the Vipassana Centre, at Section 5 Mahadhatu Monastery says in his book 'The Path to Nibbana'.

'After the performance of the mindful walking, begin to acknowledge the rise and fall of the abdomen in the sitting posture. In doing so, do not restrain the mind and body too much or use too much effort. For example, there is a form of over-exertion which arises when one feels sleepy and tries to keep awake, or when one cannot acknowledge the constant changes in one's mind and body, but still keeps up the effort. One should also never be too slack in practice and allow the mind to act under the sway of various unhealthy tendencies whenever it has the inclination. One should practise according to one's capacity without too much restraint or effort and without yielding to the power of latent tendencies. This is the Path of Moderation'.

The instructions for the second sitting exercise are essentially the same as for the first. However as concentration increases, a gap may be perceived after the abdomen falls and before it rises again. At this point the meditator puts attention on sitting. There should be mindfulness of the sitting posture. This should be a nearly instantaneous sweep of mindfulness encompasing the act of sitting followed immediately by mindfulness of the rising of the abdomen. The acknowledgements follow the following sequence 'RISING: FALLING: SITTING'.

RISING FALLING SITTING

The length of time spent on the second sitting exercise corresponds to the duration of the current walking exercise. So if the total time spent on the first three walking exercises is 40 minutes, then a further 40 minutes should be spent on the second sitting exercise. This is only a guide. The precise length of time will be determined by the instructor. Usually the third walking exercise and the second sitting exercise are introduced when the meditator has experienced the first or second Vipassana ñana, or level of Insight Knowledge.

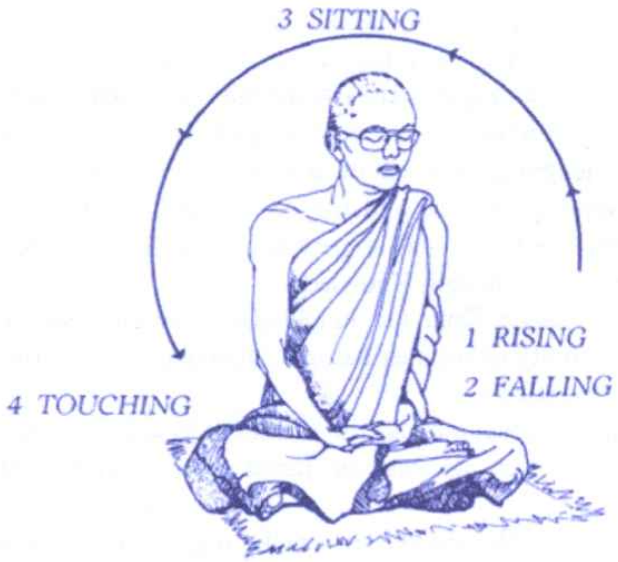
The first Vipassana ñana (or knowledge through Insight) is characterized by the ability of the meditator to distinguish nama (mentality) from rupa (materiality).

In the second Vipassana ñana, the meditator is able to preceive the conditioned inter-relationship between nama (mentality) and rupa (mentality).

It is customary for the meditator to make regular reports to the instructor. At this time the instructor asks questions to determine the meditator's progress. When the instructor has ascertained that the meditator has experienced the fifth, sixth or seventh Vipassana ñana, or level of Insight Knowledge, then the instructor introduces the fourth walking exercise ie. 'HEEL UP: LIFTING: MOVING: TREADING'. He also gives instructions for the third sitting exercise as follows; -

THE THIRD SITTING EXERCISE

After the meditator's concentration has increased to enable him or her to be clearly aware of sitting, the meditator is then instructed to add a further acknowledgement 'TOUCHING'. At this point the meditator fixes attention on all the parts of the body which are touching the floor. This acknowledgement continues from that of sitting. Attention is subsequently returned to the rising and falling of the abdomen. The sequence of acknowledgements is: 'RISING: FALLING: SITTING: TOUCHING'.



At the point where the meditator is known to have attained the eighth, ninth and tenth levels of Insight Knowledge, the fifth walking exercise and the fourth sitting exercise may be introduced.

MORE COMPLEX SITTING EXERCISES

It should be understood that for certain practitioners who can already maintain good concentration, it may not be necessary to introduce the more complex sitting exercises. Conversely children and old people may become confused and daunted by an expanded sequence of acknowledgements.

However if the fourth sitting exercise is introduced. The acknowledgement 'TOUCHING' is further subdivided firstly into bare awareness of touching with the right buttock, and then to bare awareness of touching with the left buttock. The meditator focuses his attention on the point where the right buttock touches the floor and then moves his attention back to 'RISING, FALLING, SITTING'. Then attention is placed on the point where the left buttock touches the ground, followed by 'RISING, FALLING, SITTING' as before.

The duration of the third and fourth sitting exercises is about one hour for each. This exercise may be further expanded as follows: - When the meditator is able to keep attention clearly fixed on the points where the right and left buttock touch the ground. Attention is shifted

to the knees. At this stage of the exercise, the meditator fixes mindfulness on 'RISING: FALLING: SITTING: TOUCHING' as before but instead of being aware of the point where the buttocks are in contact with the ground, he or she mentally touches the right knee, and at the next cycle, the left knee as follows : -

RISING, FALLING, SITTING (the meditator makes a mental sweep of the whole body)

TOUCHING (He or she mentally touches the right knee).

RISING, FALLING, SITTING (the meditator makes a mental sweep of the position of the whole body)

TOUCHING (He or she mentally touches the left knee).

RISING: FALLING: SITTING: TOUCHING (RIGHT KNEE)
RISING: FALLING: SITTING: TOUCHING (LEFT KNEE)

Perhaps two or three days later the meditator may be instructed to be aware of the right and left ankles, instead of the knees.

There are finer subdivisions of attention, usually being aware of the parts of the body that are not touching the floor but these will not be dealt with in detail here.

It should be borne in mind that the walking exercises mutually enhance the effectiveness of the sitting exercises and vice versa. They work together in tandem; with the walking exercises mainly but not exclusively, helping to heighten energy levels, while part of the function of the sitting exercises is to build up concentration. Both energy and concentration are essential if Insight Knowledge (or Vipassana Ñana) is to develop.

IMPEDIMENTS TO PROGRESS

When meditators start to make real progress and concentration has reached access level (upacara samadhi) many distractions may arise. These distractions take the form of strong emotions, sensations and fixed attitudes. They can be divided into 10 groups and are referred to as 'Vipassana Kilesas' or defilements of Vipassana meditation. It must be explained that it is attachment to the sensations that constitutes the defilement, not the sensation itself.

Because these occurances differ greatly from day-to-day experiences and are often very intense, meditators sometimes become misled into believing that they have reached Nibbana already. In fact the meditator can view these experiences as sign that concentration has now reach an optimum level and feel encouraged. However there should be no attachment to any pleasant sensations that arise. Conversely there should be no avoidance of unpleasant sensations that arise. Instead just let them come with mindfulness fully operational and as they change or fade away, similarly maintaining mindfulness, let them go.

Manifestations of light (OBHĀSA) may occur. These may take the form of flashes of light like fireflies, beams of light or perhaps rays of light which seem to be emitted from the meditator's heart and body. Alternatively various complex, visual images may be seen; objects such as Buddha images or flowers may appear, or the meditator may seem to gaze upon vast seascapes and so on. Sometimes the images, called 'Nimitr' may be unpleasant or even frightening.

In all cases deal with them in the same way. At the point where the meditator becomes aware of 'light' or an image, he or she should say in mind 'SEEING: SEEING: SEEING' and allow the manifestation of light to fade away. Occasionally more than three acknowledgements may be necessary. If an emotion arises as a result of the image, be clearly aware of the emotion at its inception and make the mental acknowledgement 'FEELING: FEELING: FEELING'. In this way the meditator will be free of the control of the emotion and so be able to make further progress.

The aim is neither avoidance nor repression of manifestations of light, or the emotions which may accompany them. 'Letting them come' is just as important as 'Letting them go'.

On the other hand meditators are often fascinated by the super-natural quality of the images and light which start to occur at the third stage of Vipassana knowledge (SAMMASANA ÑANA) Consequently they wish to watch the gem-like brilliance and the apparently meaningful imagery for its own sake, seeking answers implied in the forms and the mystical strangeness. In this way it is easy to become lost in a by-way. Because importance is assigned to the images, the meditator clings to them, or is carried along by them, watching an internal movie show. In this way defilement occurs because the meditator becomes attached to the imagery and is unwilling to let it go.

Meditators may also experience feelings of joy or rapture (PĪTI). The Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw writes that rapture may produce 'a sublime feeling of happiness and exhilaration, filling the whole body with an exceedingly sweet and subtle thrill'. Rapture is catagorised into 5 states ranging from feelings of coolness and itching to actual levitation. If the meditator has become deeply absorbed into rapturous states, he may feel as if he is floating in a vast sea of joy, and his body may actually rise from the floor.

A novice monk from Wat Yai Chai Mongkol in Ayuthaya province in Thailand opened his eyes at the end of a meditation session, to find himself sitting in a niche, usually reserved for Buddha Images, near the top of a chedi. He had to call to passers-by to bring ladders to enable him to get down. This is an extreme example of what can happen when a meditator fails to acknowledge the feeling of joy as it occurs and so becomes controlled by it.

The feeling of rapture or joy is a gift and an encouragement and can be taken as a sign that progress is being made. However, as with all sensations, pleasant or unpleasant, weak or seemingly powerful, familiar or exotic, rapture should be noticed with bare awareness, without partiality or prejudice. The meditator puts mindfulness clearly on the sensation and says in mind 'FEELING: FEELING: FEELING'. In this way the feeling of joy still arises but it does not become over-whelming and the meditator can remain in peace.

Other 'Vipassana Kilesas' or defilements of Vipassana meditation that can arise include 'Tranquility of mental factors and consciousness' (PASSADHI) Equanimity (UPEKKHĀ) and Mindfulness (UPAṬṬHANA). As their names suggest, these are all admirable qualities enabling the

meditator to observe all that occurs in the realm of rupa (materiality) and nama (mentality) with mental agility and a quiet, undisturbed mind. However if the meditator becomes attached to these states and believes that he or she has already reached the goal, these states too, become corrupt. It is relatively easy to see the corrupting influence of, for example, a bloated spider image; but it is more difficult to observe the more subtle defilement of contentment arising from feelings of equanimity.

Another distraction that may occur is too much faith (SADDHĀ). The meditator may wish to persuade everyone to practise Vipassana, he may wish to perform meritorious deeds or build and repair Buddhist buildings and artifacts. He may wish to give offerings to his teacher or to continue practising for ever. One lady meditator went to pay respect to the Buddha by lighting incense and candles, many, many times throughout the day. If a ceremony was in progress she would walk through the ceremony seemingly oblivious to it, to light incense in front of the Buddha image. In this case the emotion of faith had become so strong that she was no longer aware of the present moment.

Very sublime feelings of happiness (SUKHA) may arise. Bliss or happiness may vary in intensity from a feeling of comfort to a wish to keep practising for a long time, due to pleasant feelings.

(PAGGAHĀ) Exertion is another impediment that can occur causing the meditator to practise too strenuously. The meditator may over-exert himself so that attentiveness and clear-consciousness become weak causing distraction and lack of concentration. Or at this stage too, the meditator may become attached to the fact energy and concentration have now reached a state of equilibrium so that energy acts evenly, enabling the meditator to overcome sleepiness or agitation, so that whatever occurs in the present moment is noticed keenly and continuously.

The meditator may become distracted by 'thoughts' about meditation. 'He may consider various principles which he knows or has studied.' He may misunderstand but think that he is right and become fond of contending with his teacher. Alternatively the meditator may become attached to the fact that his awareness has become very keen and lucid enabling him to discern all bodily and mental process clearly.

The ten groups are : -

1. Manifestations of light or illumination (OBHĀSA)
2. Joy or rapture (PĪTI)
3. Tranquility (PASSADHI)
4. Bliss (SUKHA)
5. Faith or religious fervour (SADDHĀ)
6. Exertion (PAGGAHĀ)
7. Mindfulness (UPAṬṬHANA)
8. Knowledge (ÑĀNA)
9. Equanimity (UPEKKHĀ)
10. Gratification or satisfaction (NIKANTI)

Feelings of rapture, great faith or Nimitr (images) etc. may occur at any stage after access concentration has been reached. However at later stages the meditator has become relatively skilled at coping with them. When they first arise the meditator can easily become misled into assigning them greater importance than they deserve. Because they are unfamiliar and intense, the meditator can become overly fascinated or frightened.

Sometimes the meditator's body may shake uncontrollably There may be nausea, actual vomiting, diarrhea or excessive perspiration. The latter are signs that purification or cleansing is taking place. As meditation deepens further they will cease of their own accord.

There may be feelings of heat or coolness. The body may seem to expand or contract or lean over. All are signs that concentration has reached optimium level and they should be dealt with by maintaining bare awareness and making appropriate mental acknowledgements. In this way the meditator can go on to deeper states of awareness and Insight.

LYING DOWN MEDITATION

It should be remembered that mindfulness should not be restricted to walking and sitting exercises. It should encompass all bodily functions and postures at all times. In fact the meditator should endeavour to maintain mindfulness (or Sati) constantly. Lying down meditation further enhances awareness of all that occurs.

When moving into a lying down position. First be mindful of the intention to lie down, then be mindful of moving down and lying down, at the same time as the movements are occuring.

As the meditator starts to bend down, he or she says in mind 'BENDING'. As he or she moves down the acknowledgement 'GOING DOWN' or just 'DOWN' is made. As the mat or matress is touched by the hands 'TOUCHING'. As other parts of the body touch the mat 'TOUCHING' and so on.

Just before going to bed is a suitable time to practise lying down meditation. When practising lying down meditation the meditator is mindful of the movements of the abdomen, of the posture of lying down and of touching. The acknowledgements are 'RISING: FALLING: LYING: TOUCHING' The meditator should be aware of the body touching the mattress or the floor.

As Dhanit Yupho has said 'In lying down meditation, it is advisable to meditate only before bedtime.....because after lying down meditation, the meditator usually falls asleep'.

The walking, sitting and lying down exercises are intended to control the mind and to increase mindfulness of all that is happening in the present moment.

Venerable Jagaro writes 'While the mindfulness is undeveloped, we have to apply some control to the mind, such as concentration on breath, to prevent the awareness from being overwhelmed by infatuations, fantasies or aversion. It is always helpful to just come back to the breath or the body to stabilise and soothe the mind, but when there is the natural discipline to prevent the mind from becoming overloaded, we can contemplate peacefully the nature of things. In this way, the meditator develops a wise attitude towards the body and mind, rather than identifying with any aspect of them. This is the great happiness of Insight'.

THE BENEFITS OF VIPASSANA MEDITATION

The benefits of Vipassana meditation range from increasing the meditator's ability to cope with day to day problems to the experience of profound peace that results from the ultimate release of tensions, which takes place, when the nature of existence is fully experienced and known.

It is a truism that each of us is different. And in the practice of Vipassana as in all else, the time taken to gain benefits varies. But, even if we cannot become an Arahant (Enlightened Being) immediately, everyone can benefit in some way.

The simple expedient of stepping back from immediate involvement resulting from sense imput, allows the meditator a split second in which to choose to react or not. In practice this means that angry reactions can be better controlled. Problems that used to appear overwhelming and unsolveable come to be seen in a different light, and usually do not seem so important any more. All this serves to make the meditator more capable and unruffed, character traits which have obvious advantages both in the office and at home. The housewife who arranges her day to include half an hour or forty minutes of the tension-unravelling provided by Vipassana meditation is less likely to shout at the children or feel unbearably tired and depressed. The businessman who forgoes a liquid lunch with friends, locks the door of his office, and takes half an hour out to calm and clear his mind, is more likely to make the right decisions even under intense pressure. He is unlikely to be manoevered by associates who seek to flatter or deceive in order to further their own ends, because he will be clear-minded enough to be aware of what is happening.

Although a short period of regular daily practice is unlikely to produce stunning flashes of insight every day, it can certainly help the meditator to maintain equilibrium and to deal with problems more efficiently. What the meditator has, in effect, is a method enabling him or her, at any time, to enter into the peace within.

It is the nature of existence that everything changes. Sometimes it may be possible to move smoothly and effortlessly into deep states of awareness and at other times it may take a supreme effort of will to sustain concentration long enough to gain even a superficial feeling of relaxation. Setting aside a regular time for daily practice will help.

Other benefits of Vipassana include improved health. Diseases which are exacerbated by tension show real improvement eg. high blood pressure, migraine and some forms of paralysis. A famous meditation instructor Goengar, suffered from migraine for many years, travelling to many countries unsuccessfully seeking a cure. He found relief after practising Vipassana meditation for a short time.

In this connection the meditator may seem to age less quickly than his peers. The deep peace and energy from within radiate out so that, especially during intensive periods of meditation, the meditator's appearance changes. As tensions are released at the root, from within, the meditator's posture relaxes, movements become more fluid and youthful. The skin texture changes and faces glow with an inner light.

Some people find that meditation helps with weight reduction. This is for two reasons. When practising intensively, meditators usually keep the eight precepts, which includes not eating solid food after noon. In this case the cause is external. The second cause is more subtle. Many people overeat because they feel empty, they feel a constant lack, an unsatisfactoriness. Eating temporarily fills that gap. However, after experiencing the pervading joy and deep peace accompanying Vipassana meditation, practitioners feel profoundly satisfied and food loses its attraction for them.

Weight control is only one aspect of this process. Having experienced clear-seeing, untainted by bias or prejudice, we realize that we have been walking around half-blind. It is the same with any sensation. When hearing is no longer filtered and censored by inclinations and aversions, we really hear. The sounds are fresh and full. Suddenly we are not anaesthetised by preconceptions any more. A kind of childlike innocence is regained.

All these benefits however remain relatively superficial. The deepest benefit occurs when through wisdom, we are able to stop grasping and clinging to the sense of self. Feelings of tranquillity and rapture come and go but the deepest knowledge is all-pervading and outside time.

In 'Vipassana' the aim is freedom, enlightenment, freedom from the burden of suffering. It is gained through Insight wisdom. As mindfulness and concentration develop in a state of optimum balance and if there is enough energy and Sampajanna or clear comprehension then Insight wisdom can arise :

In 'Vipassana' the meditator clearly perceives all that occurs in the present moment, in 'this fathom long body'. Because he or she is not attached to anything, it is possible to be aware of the deepest tendencies within. It is possible to be clearly aware of the very root of attachment and aversion to whatever occurs and through clear-seeing, eradicate these tendencies at the point where they originate. In Buddhism this is termed the 'eradication of defilements'. An enlightened being is one who has eradicated all defilements. He is free from their controling influence. Through unbiased and non-prejudiced, clear awareness it is possible to see the process by which we become entangled in attachments. This 'seeing' has the meaning of being aware, or of understanding. It is mental in that there is bare awareness but it is not limited by the narrow confines of thought. It is experiential in that feelings arise and are not ignored, but it is not absorption into sensations, however rarified they may be. Through this clear comprehension based on mindfulness and concentration, it is possible for attachments and aversions to untangle themselves. The deepest tendencies of the mind are seen for what they really are, and so they lose their power to control.

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness or Satipattana is considered to incorporate both 'Samatha' (Calmness) meditation and 'Vipassana' (Insight) meditation. Combining concentration built up through 'Samatha' meditation with the wisdom developed in 'Vipassana' meditation is the way to real freedom.

In the Maha Satipatthana Sutta the Buddha said of the Foundations of Mindfulness. "This is the one way, O Bhikkhus, for the purification of beings, for the passing beyond sorrow and lamentation, for the cessation of pain and distress, for the attainment of the Supramundane

Path, for the realization of Nibbana.....".

Although it is not essential to follow an organized group course or the precise method of practice described here, it is very helpful to have a 'good friend' or guide especially when starting Vipassana practice. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu in his centre, provides facilities for the Nature Method of Vipassana meditation. This simply involves being mindful at all times. The process is often quite lengthy and today's lifestyle rarely allows time for this, so highly-organized intensive courses have a place too.

Vipassana meditation is in no way exclusive. It is not necessary to be a Buddhist to make use of this method. It is not even essential to know that this is a Buddhist method of meditation. The Buddha himself said that there were some who, though they had not heard the Dhamma directly from him, would still be able to walk the right path. 'There were some who, not having heard it from the Buddha, would nevertheless, through continuous reflection, consideration, and study, through constant observation and practice, be able to walk the right path'.

Vipassana is suitable for all, men, women, children, old and young alike. Both monks and nuns and lay people can practise.

This book is intended as a guide, a practical guide to the more organized systems of Vipassana practice. However meditators are strongly advised to practise under the guidance of an instructor at first. There is no substitute for the guidance of a good friend.

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Corrections

p. 36 line 35 For 'optumium' read 'optimum'
p. 44 line 14 For 'mentality' read 'materiality'
p. 53 line 27 For 'unruffed' read 'unruffled'

p. 50 4th paragraph should read :-
.....the meditator may become attached to the fact that energy and concentration have now reached a state of equilibrium so that energy acts evenly, enabling the meditator to overcome sleepiness or agitation. In this state of equilibrium whatever occurs in the present moment is noticed keenly and continuously.

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V.H. Publications.

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